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**FROM LANGUAGE CONTACT TO LANGUAGE VARIATION: A  
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## FROM LANGUAGE CONTACT TO LANGUAGE VARIATION: A CASE OF CONTACT-INDUCED GRAMMATICALIZATION IN ITALO-ROMANCE

### Abstract

This paper falls within the line of research dealing with the role of intralinguistic variation in contact-induced language change. Two constructions are compared in terms of their respective degrees of grammaticalization: the progressive periphrasis *ese lì c/a+Verb*, which is widespread in some Northern Italo-Romance dialects, and the corresponding Italian construction *essere lì che/a+Verb*. The study focuses on the presence of such constructions in Turin, the capital of the north-western Italian region of Piedmont, in which the former periphrasis is less grammaticalized than the latter. It contends that the grammaticalization process of *essere lì che/a+Verb* was triggered by the contact between Piedmontese dialect and Italian, whereas the pace of grammaticalization of this periphrasis is affected by the contact between different varieties of Italian. The paper points out that the case study may provide insight into more general issues concerning not only the interplay of contact and variation in language change but also the role of sociolinguistic factors in shaping contact-induced grammaticalization phenomena.

### Keywords

Contact-induced grammaticalization, language variation and change, progressive periphrasis, Italo-Romance dialects, Italian.

## 1. Introduction

This paper<sup>1</sup> addresses a case of substratum interference in the line of research dealing with the role of ongoing variation in contact-induced language change, an issue which has recently come to the fore in L  glise and Chamoreau (2013). Such a case of substratum interference falls within the process of language shift from Italo-Romance dialects toward Italian. An investigation will be made of the use of the progressive periphrasis *essere l   che/a+Verb* against the backdrop of contact between Italian and Piedmontese, the latter being an Italo-Romance dialect spoken in the north-western Italian region of Piedmont. Piedmontese (henceforth, PMS) and Italian are separate languages; all of the Italo-Romance dialects, including Piedmontese, are indeed languages coeval of fourteenth-century Florentine, the dialect from which Standard Italian descends (see e.g. Berruto 2005: 81-83).

The construction *essere l   che/a+Verb* (e.g. *sono l   che corrono* ‘they are running’, lit. ‘they are there that they run’), which is widespread in the Piedmontese regional variety of Italian, results from the retention of a substratum feature: the PMS progressive periphrasis *ese l   c/a+Verb* (e.g. *a sun l   c a curu* ‘they are running’, lit. ‘they are there that they run’)<sup>2</sup>. The paper focuses on the presence of such constructions in Turin, the capital of Piedmont; however, both periphrases also occur in other regions of Northern Italy (see e.g. Telmon 1993).

Such a case of substratum interference is here analyzed within the theoretical framework of contact-induced grammaticalization phenomena; that is, it is assumed that the contact between PMS and Italian has led the locative construction *essere l   che/a+Verb* to grammaticalize to a progressive construction. It will also be shown that the replicated construction has attained a more advanced stage along the grammaticalization cline (cf. Section 2.) than its PMS counterpart.

Arguments will be presented to demonstrate that *essere l   che/a+Verb* is further along the cline than *ese l   c/a+Verb* due to contact between different varieties of Italian. In that regard, a comparison with *stare+Gerund* will be worthwhile, as it is the most commonly used progressive periphrasis in Italian. It seems apparent that *interlinguistic* contact (i.e. contact between PMS and Italian) has acted as a propelling force in the grammaticalization process of *essere l   che/a+Verb*, whereas *intralinguistic* contact (i.e. contact between varieties of Italian) has acted as an accelerating force in the pace of grammaticalization of such a construction (cf. Section 3.).

A crucial distinction needs to be made here between the *mechanisms* of contact-induced language change, which are (psycho)linguistically motivated, and the *diffusion* of contact-induced language change, which is sociolinguistically motivated. Such a distinction will be drawn upon to account for the development of *essere l   che/a+Verb* (cf. Section 4.).

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a reduced and slightly revised version of a talk given at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven, 25.01.2013), which was entitled *Contact-induced grammaticalization: case studies from Italo-Romance*. I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Both constructions can appear in the finite (*essere l   che+Indicative*, *ese l   c+Indicative*) or non-finite (*essere l   a+Infinitive*, *ese l   a+Infinitive*) form.

## 2. A grammaticalization cline

An analysis of the aspectual meanings of *essere lì che/a+Verb* and *ese lì c/a+Verb* is needed, first of all to determine which of the following imperfective meanings are conveyed by these periphrases:

- focalized progressive, i.e. when an event is in progress at a single point in time (a so-called focalization point); e.g. *when you entered the room I was studying*;
- durative progressive, i.e. when an event is occurring over a larger period of time; e.g. *while you were listening to music, I was studying*;
- habitual: e.g. *I was studying every day*.

Furthermore, some considerations can be made regarding the compatibility of these periphrases with the perfective aspect. All of the above-mentioned aspectual values are assumed to be linked to different stages along a grammaticalization cline.

The analysis has been carried out on empirical data taken from a corpus of spontaneous speech gathered in Turin, the capital of Piedmont; spontaneous speech was mostly collected as participant-observation of informal conversations among family members, friends, and colleagues. The corpus consists of about 20 hours of recordings, made by hidden microphone, together with some utterances which could not be recorded and were simply noted down.

### 2.1. Essere lì che/a+Verb as compared with ese lì c/a+Verb

Below are some examples of imperfective meanings expressed by *ese lì c/a+Verb* (1, 3) and *essere lì che/a+Verb* (2, 4):

- (1) *in quel momento chila l era lì c*  
 at that moment she 3SG.SBJ be:PST.3SG there that  
*a vulava*  
 3SG.SBJ fly:PST.3SG  
 ‘at that moment she was flying’
- (2) *quando squilla sono lì che stiro*  
 when ring:PRS.3SG be:PRS.1SG there that iron:PRS.1SG  
 ‘when (the phone) rings I am ironing’

In utterances (1) and (2), both periphrases have a focalized progressive meaning. They describe an event going on at a single point in time: *in quel momento* ‘at that moment’ in (1) and *quando squilla* ‘when the phone rings’ in (2).

- (3) *lur a dörmu e chiel l è lì*  
 they 3PL.SBJ sleep:PRS.3PL and he 3SG.SBJ be:PRS.3SG there  
*a cure*  
 to run:INF

‘they are sleeping and he is running’

- (4) *tutto il giorno che son lì a chiamar=lo*  
 all day long that be:PRS.1SG there to call:INF=3SG.OBJ:M  
 ‘I’ve been calling him all day long’

In (3) and (4), both periphrases have a durative progressive meaning, which is suggested either by means of a sort of ‘while A, B’ structure, as is the case with *lur a dörmu e chiel l è lì a cure* (≈ ‘while they are sleeping, he is running’) in (3), or by the presence of a duration adverbial, as with *tutto il giorno* ‘all day long’ in (4).

Conversely, as for their compatibility with a habitual reading, *ese lì c/a+Verb* and *essere lì che/a+Verb* behave differently from each other, as demonstrated in the following examples:

- (5) *tüti i giòbia l è lì ’nt al negòsi c*  
 all the Thursdays 3SG.SBJ be:PRS.3SG there in the shop that  
*a m dà na man*  
 3SG.SBJ 1SG.OBL give:PRS.1SG a hand  
 ‘every Thursday he is there at the shop giving me a hand’
- (6) *il nuoto almeno una volta su tre stia sicuro*  
 the swimming at least one time out of three be:IMP.3SG sure  
*che è lì che lo salta*  
 that be:PRS.3SG there that 3SG.OBJ:M skip:PRS.3SG  
 ‘you can be sure that at least one time out of three he is skipping the swimming lesson’

Utterance (5) describes a habitual event. Nevertheless, the PMS form *l è lì c a m dà na man* does not constitute a periphrasis; *l è lì* conveys a purely locative meaning, ‘he is there’, while *c* is a complementizer connecting two separate clauses, *l è lì ’nt al negòsi* ‘he is there at the shop’ and *a m dà na man* ‘he gives me a hand’. A closer inspection of the corpus reveals that when *ese lì c/a+Verb* occurs in a habitual context, it always conveys a strictly locative meaning; that is, we cannot find evidence of the PMS periphrasis *ese lì c/a+Verb* conveying habitual meaning.

*Essere lì che/a+Verb* can instead express habitual meaning. In an utterance such as (6), this periphrasis clearly describes a recurring event, as evidenced by the adverbial *almeno una volta su tre* ‘at least one time out of three’. Furthermore, it is apparent that the elements *è lì che+Verb* are desemanticized; otherwise, it would be a case of semantic inconsistency, as *è lì* ‘he is there (at the swimming lesson)’ would clearly be at odds with *lo salta* ‘he skips it (the swimming lesson)’.

The following examples can be used to identify whether *ese lì c/a+Verb* and *essere lì che/a+Verb* are compatible with a perfective reading.

- (7) *l è stait lì a fé viagi per tüt n ani*  
 3SG.SBJ be:PST.3SG.M there to make:INF journeys for a whole year  
 ‘he has been travelling for a whole year’

- (8) *è stato lì un bel po' col cane a leggere*  
 be:PST.3SG.M there for a while with the dog to read:INF  
 'he was there for a while with the dog, reading'

In (7), the PMS periphrasis *esse lì c/a+Verb* is conjugated in a perfect tense. Perfective and imperfective values blend together. The construction indeed conveys an 'inclusive' meaning, thereby suggesting that the event has been going on up to a certain point in time and may continue beyond such a point. Examination of the corpus reveals that when *esse lì c/a+Verb* is conjugated in perfect tenses it always displays an inclusive meaning.

Once again, *essere lì che/a+Verb* behaves in a different way. In (8), where such a form is conjugated in a perfect tense, the meaning conveyed is strictly locative: *è stato lì a leggere* means not 'he was reading', but 'he was there reading'. On the other hand, the construction displays a low degree of both syntactic and semantic cohesion. Its elements are separated by two adverbials, *un bel po'* 'for a while' and *col cane* 'with the dog', the former modifying the clause as a whole, and the latter modifying only the verb phrase. Inspection of the corpus shows that when *essere lì che/a+Verb* is conjugated in a perfect tense, it always conveys a locative meaning. Hence, *essere lì che/a+Verb* turns out to be incompatible with a perfective reading.

Finally, it is worth noting that both periphrases display some actional restrictions. For example, neither can be used with permanent stative verbs. Such is the case with *\*a l'è lì c a l'è aut* (or *\*a l'è lì a ése aut*) 'he is being tall', as well as with *\*è lì che è alto* (or *\*è lì a essere alto*), all of which are unacceptable. Both the aspectual meanings and the existence of actional restrictions can function as parameters of grammaticalization (see Section 2.3.).

## 2.2. A brief comparison with *stare+Gerund*

In contemporary Italian, the progressive periphrasis most commonly used and shared nationwide is *stare+Gerund* (e.g. *sto correndo* 'I am running', lit. 'I stay running'). It is thus worth considering the aspectual meanings with which it is used in Turin, as compared to both *essere lì che/a+Verb* and *esse lì c/a+Verb*.

*Stare+Gerund* typically expresses a focalized progressive meaning, e.g. *quando sei entrato stavo studiando* 'when you entered (the room), I was studying'.

Nevertheless, in utterances such as (9) and (10) the periphrasis seems to imply further aspectual readings; both (9) and (10) are produced by Piedmont-born speakers.

- (9) *sto pensando in continuazione alla tesi*  
 stay:PRS.1SG thinking continuously to the thesis  
 'I'm continuously thinking about my graduation thesis'
- (10) *'sto mese tutte le volte sta chattando con qualcuno*  
 this month all the time stay:PRS.3SG chatting with somebody  
 'this month he is chatting with somebody all the time'

In (9), the duration adverbial *in continuazione* ‘continuously’ seems to suggest a durative progressive reading, whereas in (10) the frequentative adverbial *tutte le volte* ‘all the time’ seems to pinpoint a habitual meaning. On the other hand, *stare+Gerund* is widening its range of imperfective meanings in contemporary Italian; in fact, it tends to be used and accepted not only with a focalized progressive meaning but also with durative progressive and habitual meanings (cf. Berruto, 1987, 2012; Cortelazzo, 2007; Degano, 2005; Rossi, 2009; Squartini, 1990, 1998). In particular, *stare+gerund* is compatible with a habitual reading as long as ‘the habit denoted is restricted to a given temporal interval’ (Squartini, 1998: 111). Such is the case with (10) as well: the periphrasis describes a habitual situation (*tutte le volte sta chattando con qualcuno* ‘he/she is chatting with somebody all the time’), but the habit is restricted to a certain period (*sto mese* ‘this month’).

Notwithstanding, it cannot be ruled out that such utterances actually convey a focalized meaning. In both (9) and (10), indeed, one cannot exclude that *stare+Gerund* describes an event going on at a single point in time. In other words, in both sentences one can suppose the existence of an implicit vantage point, e.g. *in questo periodo* ‘at this time’ in (9) (in which the focalization point ‘has not necessarily be considered as a punctual temporal point, since it can also be denoted by an interval’; Squartini, 1998: 83) and *quando controllo* ‘when I check’ in (10) (in which the habitual event may be ‘viewed as occurring at some particular points in time, which repeat themselves more or less regularly’; Bertinetto, 2000: 586).

Conversely, there would seem to be no doubt about the meanings of utterances (11) and (12).

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| (11) | <i>da mezzogiorno all’una</i> <i>ti</i> <i>sta</i> <i>aspettando</i> <i>a casa</i><br>from noon until one            2SG.OBL    stay:PRS.3SG    waiting            at home<br>‘from noon until one o’clock he is waiting for you at home’   |
| (12) | <i>quando le fai il bagnetto</i> <i>stai</i> <i>usando</i> <i>il sapone</i><br>whenever you bathe her            stay:PRS:2SG    using            the soap<br><i>che</i> <i>t’ho dato?</i><br>that            I gave you<br>‘whenever you bathe her are you using the soap I gave you?’ |

In (11) the presence of the duration adverbial *da mezzogiorno all’una* ‘from noon until one o’clock’ clearly suggests a durative progressive reading, while in (12), *quando le fai il bagnetto* ‘whenever you bathe her’ reveals a truly habitual situation. Neither in (11) nor in (12) can the event be understood as being focalized progressive in nature.

It is no coincidence that utterances (11) and (12) came from speakers native to Southern Italy, who were part of the massive internal migration to Turin in the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, *stare+Gerund* covers a wider range of aspectual values in Southern regional varieties of Italian than in both Standard Italian and Northern regional varieties (see e.g. Amenta, 1999)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A reviewer points out that elsewhere in Northern Italy utterances (9) and (10) may be perceived as produced by a Southern Italian speaker as well; the compatibility of *stare+Gerund* with durative progressive and habitual meanings cannot be taken for granted outside Turin. The occurrence of



Lastly, *stare*+Gerund is not compatible with the perfective aspect; by way of example, an utterance such as *\*sono stato correndo* ‘I have been running’ is not acceptable in contemporary Italian (cf. Squartini, 1998). Moreover, *stare*+Gerund is subject to actional restrictions; for example, it cannot be used with permanent stative verbs, e.g. *\*sta essendo alto* (‘he is being tall’).

### 2.3. A comprehensive scheme

Fig. 1 below illustrates the grammaticalization cline of a progressive periphrasis made by Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot (2000). The construction starts out as locative (stage I); then the locative verb begins to turn into an auxiliary (stage II) and subsequently loses its locative meaning (stage III). At these stages, the construction conveys a durative meaning and is compatible with the perfective aspect. Further along, however, the construction acquires a focalized progressive meaning and can no longer be used in the perfective aspect (stage IV). At the final stage, the construction is no longer restricted to progressive contexts and thus can also occur with a habitual meaning (stage V). At this stage, the actional restrictions are dropped as well. It should also be mentioned that throughout this process the same construction can encompass more than one stage at the same time.

<INSERT FIG. 1 HERE>

Basically, as summarized in Fig. 2, at the initial stage of grammaticalization the construction is compatible with the perfective aspect (a), conveys a durative progressive meaning (b), and displays actional restrictions; at the final stage of grammaticalization the construction covers all three imperfective meanings (durative progressive, focalized progressive [c], and habitual [d]), is incompatible with the perfective aspect, and no longer displays actional restrictions (e). It passes through intermediate stages, one of which may be the strictly focalized progressive stage.

<INSERT FIG. 2 HERE>

A crucial step in such a grammaticalization cline is constituted by the extension of the periphrasis to cover both progressive and habitual meanings. In the words of Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994: 141), ‘the more specific progressive grams may undergo development into [...] an imperfective [...]. A major step in such a development is the extension of the progressive to express habitual meaning’. In Romance languages, this cline is being undertaken by progressive periphrases formed with a copula descending from the Latin *STARE* or *ESSE* (cf. Bertinetto, 2000; Laca, 1998; Pusch, 2003; Squartini, 1998). However, none of them has yet attained the final stage. According to Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot (2000: 540), ‘a possible future development [...] consists in the eventual reduction of prog[ressive] constructions to a purely imperfective form; that is, a form not restricted to progressive contexts, but appearing also in habitual ones’.

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utterances such as (9) and (10) in a Northern setting may hence represent itself an outcome of contact with Southern regional varieties of Italian.

At this point, a comprehensive scheme can be provided for the periphrases in question (see Fig. 3). *Essere lì che/a+Verb* is further along the grammaticalization cline than *ese lì c/a+Verb*, the former being compatible with a habitual reading and not compatible with the perfective aspect. Moreover, *essere lì che/a+Verb* is at a similar stage of development as *stare+Gerund*, which is increasingly used and accepted even in durative progressive and habitual contexts. Nevertheless, it should be noted that *stare+Gerund* is still subject to restrictions in habitual contexts and behaves differently according to different regional varieties of Italian (cf. Section 2.2.). It is for this reason that dotted lines appear in Fig. 3.

<INSERT FIG. 3 HERE>

This case study clearly falls within the range of substratum interference phenomena (cf. Sankoff, 2002; Thomason and Kaufman, 1988), and more specifically, it can be analyzed as a case of contact-induced grammaticalization. Referring to the framework outlined by Heine and Kuteva (2003, 2005, 2010), it can be depicted as follows (cf. Fig. 4): Piedmontese dialect (the model language, M) provides a model construction, the progressive periphrasis *ese lì c/a+Verb* (Mx, which is presumably the result of a grammaticalization process from a locative construction, My); due to contact with Piedmontese dialect, in Italian (the replica language, R) the locative construction *essere lì che/a+Verb* (Ry) is grammaticalized to a progressive construction (Rx).

<INSERT FIG. 4 HERE>

The locative construction *essere lì che/a+Verb* is already attested in Old Italian. However, a search in the OVI Corpus (a corpus of Old Italian, [www.gattoweb.ovi.cnr.it](http://www.gattoweb.ovi.cnr.it)) indicates that *essere lì che/a+Verb* is used in Old Italian *only* as a locative construction, as shown in (13). It is thus the contact with Italo-Romance dialects such as Piedmontese that triggered the grammaticalization process from a locative construction to a progressive periphrasis in Italian.

- (13) *che semper ne fia lì presente a confortare*  
 that always LOC be:PRS.3SG there present to comfort.INF  
*e consolare quelli in Christo Ihesù*  
 and console:INF those in Jesus Christ  
 ‘that she is always there to comfort and console those men of Jesus Christ’  
 (Statuto dei Disciplini di Santa Maria Maddalena, XIV sec., OVI Corpus)

Language contact indeed acts ‘as a propelling force, as a trigger for the grammaticalization’ (Heine and Kuteva, 2010: 95), and after this triggering effect, the development of replicated constructions is language-internal (cf. Giacalone Ramat, 2008). In fact, replicated constructions are ‘placed in systemic contexts which they affect and by which they are affected’ (Johanson, 2002: 300), becoming part of a system of related elements. Once created, they develop along the same grammaticalization cline as their model constructions, though following inner dynamics; such dynamics are

driven by the existing relations between the linguistic elements of the recipient language in which the replicated constructions come to take part. Moreover, the grammaticalization process rarely ends up in a replica construction which is fully equivalent to the model construction, as stated by Heine and Kuteva (2003: 559): ‘in the majority of cases examined the replica construction is less grammaticalized than the corresponding model construction’. It is interesting to note, on the contrary, that in this specific case the replica construction turns out to be *more* grammaticalized than the corresponding model construction.

In light of the foregoing, in order to explain why *essere lì che/a+Verb* is further along the cline than *ese lì c/a+Verb*, it is necessary to investigate the existing relations between *essere lì che/a+Verb* and *stare+Gerund* within the context of contact between varieties of Italian.

### 3. From language contact to language variation

Before considering the case study itself, it is worth mentioning some general aspects of language contact and language variation in Italo-Romance.

#### 3.1. Contact and variation in Italo-Romance: crucial aspects to consider

Some transfers of linguistic features from Italo-Romance dialects to Italian can be attested from as early as the sixteenth century (the standard norm of Italian having been codified and established in the first half of that century). However, they became increasingly frequent once political unification had been achieved in 1861. At this time, Italo-Romance dialects were the languages for everyday purposes, whereas Italian was used almost exclusively in writing and in formal styles and was spoken by a clear minority of the population. Following the period of Unification, Italian increasingly spread among dialect speakers. In the process of acquiring Italian, dialect speakers transferred dialect features to Italian, thus creating various interlanguages which stabilized once they had reached a stage considered adequate for everyday communicative purposes. Such interlanguages gave rise to regional varieties of Italian, which differed from one another depending on the various substrata. The stabilization of these regional varieties is datable to the period between the two World Wars (cf. De Mauro, 1970: 143-144). Since the mid twentieth century, the different regional varieties of Italian have become the mother tongue of the new generations (see Cerruti, 2011 for more details), thus launching the process of language shift from dialects to Italian.

Since Unification, Italian has increasingly spread in speech and in informal domains as well. Spoken and written language have become mutually interrelated, leading to a restandardization process which consists in the progressive acceptance of spoken informal (as well as socially marked) features into standard Italian. Such a process has given rise to an emerging new standard variety known as neo-standard Italian (Berruto, 1987, 2012). Moreover, in various regions of Italy, certain regional features have enjoyed diffusion both among more and less educated speakers, as well as

among younger and older speakers, and have come to constitute accepted regional norms, coexisting with the national standard. As a result, regional standards have emerged (cf. Auer, 2011 and Kristiansen and Coupland, 2011 on the emergence of regional standards in many contemporary European languages). Neo-standard Italian and regional standards are neighboring varieties in the linguistic repertoire. The former has a tendency to include both linguistic features shared nationwide and features ascribable to different regional standards; in fact, neo-standard Italian accepts a certain amount of geographic differentiation.

### 3.2. Essere *lì che/a+Verb*: a regional standard feature

At this point, it is important to investigate the social markedness and the regional standardness of *essere lì che/a+Verb*. Its social markedness has been analyzed by means of a translation test, in which a sample of 40 informants was asked to translate three sentences from Piedmontese dialect into Italian, each including *essere lì che/a+Verb*. The periphrasis was used with focalized progressive meaning in one sentence, with durative progressive meaning in another, and with habitual meaning in the third. The sample was representative of different age groups (young/elderly informants) and levels of education (highly educated/poorly educated informants). Furthermore, the elderly informants were native speakers of Piedmontese dialect, whereas the young informants were native speakers of the Piedmontese regional variety of Italian (henceforth, PI).

Table 1 reports the outcome of the translation test<sup>4</sup>. At times, *ese lì c/a+Verb* was translated using *essere lì che/a+Verb* while at others with *stare+Gerund* (as well as other periphrases<sup>5</sup>) or a verbal tense. *Essere lì che/a+Verb* is attested both among young and elderly speakers, as well as among highly and poorly educated speakers; hence its occurrence does not display social markedness. Nevertheless, it is apparent from the table that *essere lì che/a+Verb* does not convey the same range of aspectual values as frequently among young informants as among elderly informants. In particular, it is only rarely the case that *essere lì che/a+Verb* expresses habitual meaning among the latter. (In addition, a certain number of merely automatic word-for-word translations cannot be overlooked). Although the sample is not broad enough to be thoroughly representative, such age-related variation may signal a change which has occurred over the last decades (cf. e.g. Chambers, 2002 on the apparent-time hypothesis). It can be argued that such a change concerning the grammaticalization stage of *essere lì che/a+Verb* (the inclusion of habitual meaning representing a crucial step in the grammaticalization cline; see Section 2.3.) is related to the transmission of the

<sup>4</sup> This table is to be read as follows: The PMS sentence in which *ese lì c/a+Verb* conveys a focalized meaning (*quand c i sun entrà, la mnestra a l era lì c a buiva* “when I entered [the room], the soup was boiling”) was translated six times using *essere lì che/a+Verb* (*quando sono entrato, la minestra era lì che bolliva*) and four times using *stare+Gerund* (*quando sono entrato, la minestra stava bollendo*) among highly educated young speakers; five times using *essere lì che/a+Verb*, three times using *stare+Gerund*, two times using a verbal tense (*quando sono entrato, la minestra bolliva*) among poorly educated young speakers; and so on.

<sup>5</sup> *Continuare a* + Infinitive, expressing a durative progressive meaning, e.g. *continuo a parlare per un po’* “I keep on talking for a while”; *essere solito* + Infinitive, conveying a habitual meaning, e.g. *sono solito mangiare pasta a pranzo* “I usually have pasta for lunch”.

periphrasis from generations of native speakers of PMS to generations of native speakers of PI (cf. Section 3.1.).

<INSERT TAB. 1 HERE>

As for the regional standardness of *essere lì che/a+Verb*, it is worth noting that it currently occurs not only in casual speech but also in public speaking and writing. According to Ammon (2003: 1), ‘anyone who regularly speaks and writes publicly may contribute to [...] initiate new standard norms’. Professional speakers and writers number indeed among the social forces which determine what is standard in a language (alongside language norm authorities, language experts, and language codices; cf. Ammon, 2003). Journalists, in particular, represent the main model writers responsible for admitting a certain linguistic feature into neo-standard Italian (neo-standard itself has recently been proposed to be renamed *italiano giornalistico* ‘journalistic Italian’; cf. Antonelli, 2011). Below are some occurrences of *essere lì che/a+Verb* found in *La Stampa*, a national daily newspaper edited and published in Turin.

- (14) *Lei ha incrociato il mio sguardo imbarazzato (ero*  
 she crosses my embarrassed look be:PST.1SG  
*lì che contavo a mente [...])*  
 there that calculate:PST.1SG in mind  
 ‘she caught my embarrassed look (I was calculating in my head)’  
 Mimmo Candito, *La Stampa* 16.02.1998
- (15) *voi maschi che siete sempre lì che*  
 you men that be:PRS.2PL always there that  
*vi fregate la lampada di Aladino*  
 2PL.OBL rub:PRS.2PL the Aladdin’s lamp  
 ‘you men who are always rubbing Aladdin’s lamp’  
 Luciana Littizzetto, *La Stampa* 07.04.2011
- (16) *Balo ancora una volta è lì che*  
 Balo once again be.PRS.3SG there that  
*si scusa*  
 3SG.REFL apologize:PRS.3SG  
 ‘Balotelli is apologizing once again’  
 Gianluca Oddenino, *La Stampa* 23.03.2012

*Essere lì che/a+Verb* has a focalized progressive meaning in (14), with *lei ha incrociato il mio sguardo imbarazzato* ‘she caught my embarrassed look’ serving as a focalization point, and a durative progressive meaning in (15), with the durative adverbial *sempre* ‘always’ suggesting that the event has been going on for some time. In (16), the periphrasis describes a habitual event occurring at a particular point in time (as conveyed by the adverbial *ancora una volta* ‘once again’).

In light of the above, *essere lì che/a+Verb* enjoys diffusion both among young and elderly speakers (albeit with aspectual differences), as well as among more and less

educated speakers, and represents an accepted regional norm. Therefore, it can be said to constitute a feature of the PI regional standard.

Because they are neighboring and in contact, regional standards and neo-standard Italian (see Section 3.1.) are generally at similar stages of common tendencies of development (cf. Cerruti and Regis, in press). The same holds true in this case as well: *essere lì che/a+Verb* has indeed attained a grammaticalization stage similar to that of *stare+Gerund*, which in neo-standard Italian is increasingly accepted both with progressive and habitual meanings (see e.g. Berruto, 2012: 81-82; Cortelazzo, 2007). Given the sociolinguistic context of Turin, the contact between PI and southern regional varieties of Italian may play a role as well, as *stare+Gerund* covers a wider range of aspectual values in these varieties (cf. Section 2.2.). Moreover, younger speakers in Turin generally attach covert prestige to southern varieties (see e.g. Boario, 2008; Cortinovis and Miola, 2009). In other words, the contact between language varieties in a ‘language space’ (in the sense of Berruto, 2010) can be argued to affect the pace of grammaticalization (cf. Carlier, De Mulder and Lamiroy, 2012) of a contact-induced linguistic feature. Once a replicated construction is created, it can then conform to the rules which govern the use of its corresponding features in related varieties.

At this point, in order to explain the development of *essere lì che/a+Verb*, mention must be made of the distinction between the mechanisms and diffusion of a contact-induced change.

#### 4. Mechanism and diffusion of a contact-induced change

Broadly speaking, a feature was replicated from Piemontese dialect to Piedmontese Italian and has since undergone some changes; more specifically, the replicated construction *essere lì che/a+Verb* has come to be incompatible with the perfective aspect and compatible with a habitual meaning, thus differentiating itself from the model construction *esse lì c/a+Verb*. The original agents of transfer were native speakers of PMS, and the feature has been subject to the inter-generational transmission from native speakers of PMS to native speakers of PI, i.e. from speakers whose linguistically dominant language is dialect to speakers whose linguistically dominant language is Italian.

In such a framework, a distinction should be made between two different kinds of language dominance, *linguistic dominance* and *social dominance* (the latter akin to the notion of ‘imposition’ in the sense of Johanson, 2002; cf. Winford, 2007). Linguistic dominance occurs when the speaker is more proficient in one of the languages in contact; this language is the linguistically dominant language of the speaker, i.e. the dominant language in the individual linguistic repertoire. Social dominance refers to a situation in which one of the languages in contact has a higher status than the others; the language of higher status is the socially dominant language, i.e. the dominant language in the community linguistic repertoire. A linguistic dominance relationship is associated with ‘the *mechanism* of change, which [...] has to do with the (psycho)linguistic processes that reside in individual minds’ (Winford, 2008: 127), whereas that of social dominance corresponds to the ‘*diffusion* of change, which [...] has to do with processes

of diffusion, leveling and focusing [...] within speech communities, which are sociolinguistically motivated' (Winford, 2008: 127; cf. Labov, 2007).

In a language contact situation, linguistic features are transferred from a source language (otherwise known as *model language*; cf. Section 2.3.) to a recipient language (also called *replica language*; cf. Section 2.3.). Following Van Coetsem (1988, 2000), it is also worth determining whether the agents of transfer are speakers of the source language (*source language agentivity*) or of the recipient language (*recipient language agentivity*). The linguistically dominant language of the agents of change is typically the source language in the former case and the recipient language in the latter. Yet another useful distinction in Van Coetsem's (1988, 2000) framework is that between *adaptation* and *imitation*. Adaptation means that linguistic material of the recipient language is employed to replicate a linguistic element of the source language; the replicated feature is hence consistent with the rules of the source language. Conversely, imitation accounts for the fact that a contact-induced linguistic feature can adjust to the rules of the recipient language.

Turning back to the case study at hand, the mechanism by which such contact-induced change arose is related to the imperfect learning of Italian by dialect speakers (cf. Section 3.1.). This is so in most cases involving the retention of substratum features in Italian. Such imperfect learning led to the occurrence of dialect features in Italian, thus driving the change (cf. Labov, 2001: Chap. 9 on the driving forces of linguistic change); in other words, features of the linguistically dominant language of dialect speakers were transferred to the socially dominant language of the community, thus giving rise to regional varieties of Italian. At this stage, the agents of change were native speakers of dialect (the source language) and it was the source language which took the 'agentivity' role (see also Auer and Hinskens, 1996: 8). Dialect speakers hence employed the so-called source language agentivity in introducing changes to Italian, and thus the mechanism of change was adaptation.

Moreover, the diffusion of the contact-induced linguistic feature, as well as the consequent changes it has undergone, is related to sociolinguistic dynamics internal to the recipient language (cf. Section 3.1.). This contact-induced feature has experienced changes due to contact between language varieties of Italian, thus becoming more consistent with the rules concerning the use of its counterparts in such varieties in contact (cf. Section 3.2.). It is crucial to note that this feature is especially widespread among speakers whose linguistically dominant language is Italian, the recipient language. At this stage, in fact, it can be argued that the agents of change are mainly native speakers of Italian and that it is the recipient language itself which takes the agentivity role; this stage broadly matches Van Coetsem's (2000) imitation. Therefore, as in most cases of substratum interference (cf. Van Coetsem, 2000), imitation follows adaptation (see Fig. 5).

<INSERT FIG. 5 HERE>

In short, source language agentivity has acted as a propelling force, triggering the grammaticalization process of the replicated construction, whereas recipient language agentivity has acted as an accelerating force, affecting the pace of grammaticalization of such a construction.

## 5. Conclusion

Both Heine and Kuteva's (2003, 2005) contact-induced grammaticalization framework and Van Coetsem's (1988, 2000) distinction between source language agentivity and recipient language agentivity have been employed to account for a case of substratum interference in Italo-Romance.

The main points of the process can be summarized as follows:

- (i) interlinguistic contact, i.e. the contact between Piedmontese dialect and Italian, has acted as a propelling force, triggering a grammaticalization process; the replicated construction, i.e. *essere lì che/a+Verb*, has undergone a grammaticalization cline based on language-internal development;
- (ii) intralinguistic contact, i.e. contact between PI regional standard and neo-standard Italian, as well as between PI and southern regional varieties of Italian, has acted as an accelerating force, affecting the pace of grammaticalization of the replicated construction; *essere lì che/a+Verb* has come to lie further along the cline than the model construction.

It has been argued that source language speakers act as agents of change at stage (i), whereas recipient language speakers act as the main agents of change at stage (ii). At both stages, the agentivity role is played by the dominant language in the individual linguistic repertoire.

The case study may provide further insight into more general issues concerning not only the role of intralinguistic variation in contact-induced language change but also the role of sociolinguistic factors in shaping contact-induced grammaticalization phenomena. Research on the sociolinguistic *coté* of contact-induced grammaticalization is lacking when it comes to considering such elements as contact between varieties of the recipient language and the connections between language dominance and language agentivity; it is frequently the case that only interlinguistic contact and social dominance relationships are regarded fully. Conversely, as suggested by the case study analysis, it can be of avail to reckon with both interlinguistic and intralinguistic contact, as well as with the interplay of linguistic dominance and social dominance when seeking to describe and understand contact-induced grammaticalization phenomena.



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## Tables

**Tab. 1. The translation test**

	Young, highly educated	Young, poorly educated	Elderly, highly educated	Elderly, poorly educated
Foc.:	6 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	5 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	4 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	4 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>
	4 <i>stare+Gerund</i>	3 <i>stare+Gerund</i>	3 <i>stare+Gerund</i>	4 <i>stare+Gerund</i>
		2 verbal tense	3 verbal tense	2 verbal tense
Dur.:	8 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	7 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	6 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	6 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>
	1 <i>stare+Gerund</i>	2 verbal tense	2 verbal tense	2 verbal tense
	1 verbal tense	1 <i>stare+Gerund</i>	2 <i>continuare a+Infin.</i>	2 <i>continuare a+Infin.</i>
Hab.:	7 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	6 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	7 verbal tense	8 verbal tense
	2 verbal tense	4 verbal tense	2 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>	2 <i>essere lì che/a+Verb</i>
	1 <i>stare+Gerund</i>		1 <i>essere solito+Infin.</i>	

Legenda: *Foc.* Focalized progressive; *Dur.* Durative progressive; *Hab.* Habitual; *Infin.* infinitive.

## Figures

**Fig. 1. PROG-imperfective drift (Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot, 2000: 540)**

	(I) pure locativity
	(II) residually locative, durative, compatible with the perfective aspect
	(III) durative, compatible with the perfective aspect
	(IV) focalized, strictly imperfective
↓	(V) pure imperfectivity

**Fig. 2. The grammaticalization cline**

locative meaning > a., b. > ... > (c.) > ... > b., c., d., e.

Legenda: *a.* compatible with the perfective aspect; *b.* durative progressive; *c.* focalized progressive; *d.* habitual; *e.* no actional restrictions.

**Fig. 3. The grammaticalization cline: a comparison**

<i>a.</i>	<i>b.</i>	<i>c.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>e.</i>
compatible with the perfective aspect	durative progressive	focalized progressive	habitual	no actional restrictions

<i>ese l' c/a+Verb</i>
------------------------

<i>essere l' che/a+Verb</i>
-----------------------------

<i>stare+Gerund</i>
---------------------

**Fig. 4. The contact-induced grammaticalization framework**

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M (Piedmontese dialect)

[My (locative *ese lì c/a+Verb*) >] Mx (progressive *ese lì c/a+Verb*)

---

R (Italian)

Ry (locative *essere lì che/a+Verb*) > Rx (progressive *essere lì che/a+Verb*)

---



**Fig. 5. From language contact to language variation: a summary**

